

## ENLISTMENT OF COOKS IN THE ARMY.

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JUNE 17, 1898.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

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Mr. HULL, from the Committee on Military Affairs, submitted the following

### REPORT.

[To accompany H. R. 10693.]

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 10693) directing the enlistment of cooks in the Regular and Volunteer armies of the United States, report the same back to the House with the recommendation that it do pass.

The report from the Secretary of War and the Commissary-General is herewith submitted.

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WAR DEPARTMENT,  
Washington, June 13, 1898.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith a letter from the Commissary-General of Subsistence, dated June 9, 1898, inclosing draft of a bill "directing the enlistment of cooks in the Regular and Volunteer armies of the United States." The need of the proposed legislation and benefits to the service to be secured by its enactment are explained in detail by the Commissary-General of Subsistence. As the proper feeding of the soldier is of the highest importance, the matter is recommended to the favorable consideration of Congress.

Very respectfully,

R. A. ALGER, *Secretary of War.*

THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

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WAR DEPARTMENT,  
OFFICE COMMISSARY-GENERAL OF SUBSISTENCE,  
Washington, June 9, 1898.

SIR: Much dissatisfaction at the food supply is prevalent among the raw troops who have recently taken the field. Complaints of all kinds are rife—some as to the quantity of the rations, some as to the quality, some as to the variety of components, others as to the want of proper preparation. History is but repeating itself. The same state of affairs existed after the great armies of the rebellion had taken the field. Congress in August, 1861, largely increased the ration over what it had been previous to that time, yet complaints of its insufficiency arose in face of the fact that the food allowance to each man was larger than was necessary for his subsistence. This excess of food supplies for the Army, besides adding to the cost and difficulties of

transportation, failed to benefit the enlisted man, as the surplus did not reach him, but was disposed of and the proceeds went to make up large post and regimental funds.

The insufficiency of the ration was not the true cause of complaint then any more than it is the true cause now. In March, 1863, to meet the clamor then prevalent, Congress passed a law establishing a system of supervision of army cooking by the medical and line officers, and provided for the promulgation of regulations for the proper preparation of the ration of the soldier. The law also provided for the detail of cooks for companies and the enlistment of undercooks. In March of the succeeding year an inquiry by the Military Committee of the Senate brought out the information that the ration was larger than was necessary; that the one allowed prior to August, 1861, was amply sufficient, and that it was advisable to reduce the ration and add the value of the reduction to the soldier's pay rather than continue the system of purchasing savings, the money of which it was thought went to objects foreign to the subsistence of the soldier. The army ration was accordingly restored to what it was prior to August, 1861, and, with the attention given to the cooking, complaints very generally ceased in the Army. The ration remains to-day, in its principal constituents, practically the same as this law left it.

One of the most important problems of the military art is the proper feeding of the soldier. Under existing regulations food supplies are issued for periods of ten days at a time. Men coming fresh from the walks of private life are unskilled in the art of cooking. The ten days' rations, if intrusted to them, are from their inexperience and unskillfulness too often used up by the seventh or eighth day, and complaints, spreading abroad, too often give rise to the supposition that the Government is not supplying sufficient food, whereas what is supplied constitutes a ration that is more ample than any other in the world and fully sufficient, if properly cared for and properly cooked, to meet all the needs for nourishment.

The presence of skilled cooks in the Army will stop waste and bad cooking and conduce to the content of the enlisted man and the preservation of his health. The detail of enlisted men for regular tours of duty as assistants to the cooks will serve to educate them in this necessary accomplishment of the seasoned soldier, and bad cooking will disappear and the men become self-reliant and self-dependent when separated from their commands individually or in detachments.

Profiting by the experience of the late war, therefore, I respectfully recommend the passage of a law directing the enlistment of a cook for each company, troop, or battery, to be a part of the authorized strength of the organization and an important and desirable addition to the existing agencies for carrying on the internal administration of the affairs of the organization. Under proper regulations prescribing his duties, the cook will not be in any sense a noncombatant, for he can be "set up" and perfected in drill and be made as valuable as any other soldier in engagements with the enemy.

I inclose herewith the draft of a law such as I propose, and beg, if it meets your approval, that you will forward it favorably recommended to the military committees of both houses of Congress.

Very respectfully,

CHAS. P. EGAN,  
*Commissary-General of Subsistence.*

The SECRETARY OF WAR.

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